

to the next President—have the tools they need to secure a strong and enforceable trade agreement for American workers.

The bill recently passed the Finance Committee on an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote, and I intend to take it up after we complete action on the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act.

But, for now, let me just say that Congress is pleased to have the Prime Minister join us today. We thank Prime Minister Abe and his country for their enduring friendship.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT REVIEW ACT

MR. REID. Mr. President, I am grateful for the work done yesterday and during the entire process of working toward an agreement on the important Iran legislation.

Senators CORKER and CARDIN have done a magnificent job. They are both good managers. I would suggest everyone who is concerned about amendments should come and talk to the two managers before they lay down their amendments.

There is a process for moving amendments forward. It has been very well articulated by both Senator CARDIN and Senator CORKER, so we know what rules we can move under today.

We know there are difficult issues with this bill—and those are some of the things we do here, work on difficult issues—not always but some of the time.

WASHINGTON NATIONALS

MR. REID. Mr. President, Senator MCCONNELL and I love our jobs. We realize how important things are that we work on, but once in a while we take a minute and talk about one of our hobbies and that is watching baseball.

Because we are in Washington and have been for some time, we have been focused recently on the Nationals. They started off in a very bad fashion, losing, now—last night, they were in the process of a six-game losing streak. They brought in a pitcher because their star was injured. He gave up nine runs in two innings. So I think we were both fairly well going to acknowledge they were going to lose their seventh straight, but they won the game 13 to 12.

I admire the tenacity of the Republican leader because he watched the end of the game. I couldn't do that. I tried, but at the beginning of the ninth inning—they had given up more runs earlier—they were behind with one out, and I said: I am going to go to bed. I was surprised when I got up this morning and they had won. So we had a good

laugh talking about the game today that they had won. As I indicated, I am sorry I didn't get to watch the last of the game. I decided I didn't have enough faith in the team, and I went to bed.

THE BUDGET

MR. REID. Mr. President, budgets should be about reality, not ideology. The reality of the budget today is that our middle class is being pushed to the edge of extinction, and that is the truth, while there is an ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor. As I have said—I will continue to say—the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting much poorer. But perhaps the most brutal reality is that Congress is not doing its job, and the real brutal reality is that congressional Republicans don't even seem to care.

In the very near future, the Senate is expected to consider a conference report on the Republican budget resolution. It is a budget that is as irresponsible as it is immoral.

It is a budget based on the failed ideology of a political party out of touch with America's middle class, a political party that is out of touch with reality. It amounts to an all-out attack on working families, an attack designed to protect only the interests of millionaires, billionaires, and many special interests.

The Republican budget would deprive more than 16 million Americans of their health insurance. It allows big insurance companies to, once again, discriminate against women. It would cause people who have disabilities to be unable to get insurance—as it used to be before ObamaCare came into being. It threatens the coverage of hard-working Americans who lose their jobs or suffer from, as I have indicated, preexisting medical conditions.

The budget that is proposed by my Republican friends would also make deep cuts to Medicare at the expense of our Nation's seniors. It would raise taxes on working Americans by allowing the expansion of the earned-income tax credit and allows the child tax credit to simply expire, go out of existence.

It would end key supports that help young Americans afford college. At a time when student debt is higher than credit card debt—we have tried to resolve it on the Senate floor, but the Republicans vote unanimously no. They are not going to cut parents—these young men and women who have debt—any slack.

The budget they propose would undermine job training—and certainly at a time when we need it with the changing technology that creates jobs—for Americans who are simply trying to better themselves and get a good job or a better job.

Meanwhile, Republicans refuse to close a single tax loophole to reduce the deficit—not one. They will not end tax breaks for companies that send

jobs overseas. They will not close loopholes for wealthy hedge fund managers. They will not do away with wasteful tax breaks for the oil and gas industry.

Once again, Republicans are attacking the middle class, and they are attacking it forcefully, while protecting the superwealthy.

The budget is just wrong. It is also dishonest.

It claims to be balanced. There is no balance in this budget. That is a word. The budget is no more balanced than the earthquakes they have had in Nepal. It claims to reach balance, but the claim is laughable, based on gimmicks and massive cuts that are left unspecified.

When you have editorials from magazines such as Forbes, a conservative magazine, denigrating the Republican budget, you know it is wrong. One of the worst aspects of this budget is it uses sequestration to undermine America's middle class, to underfund the investments needed for our security and our future.

Let's talk about sequestration for a minute, these automatic cuts. The example is the National Institutes of Health. It becomes very personal when you see these issues that face Americans—diabetes, the flu. The Presiding Officer is a physician who specializes in eyes. But the flu kills tens of thousands of people in America every year, and the NIH was on the verge of a universal vaccine for flu, any type of flu. As we know, what they do now, they try to find out what the flu is going to be, the variety of flu in a given year, and then they try to mix and match. Last year, that was effective at less than 50 percent. So if you got the flu shot—60 percent of people who got the flu shot got the flu anyway. But because of sequestration, they had to drop that. They have never gotten that money back—\$1.6 billion.

I mentioned eyes. I have become very concerned about eyes in the last couple of months, and there are all kinds of programs at the NIH that could be funded much better dealing with problems such as I have.

So it is simply wrong that they are going to go forward with this sequestration. It is wrong.

Sequestration was never intended to be implemented. It was designed with cuts so deep and so stupid that Congress would never let them happen. But my Republican colleagues let them happen. Republicans recognize that sequestration poses a threat to our national security, and their budget uses a gimmick.

I am not calling it a gimmick—or at least I am not alone. We have Republicans—the junior Senator from Tennessee is talking about how he won't support the budget because he thinks there are some gimmicks in it, and many editorials have been written using that term over and over again. Their budget is not balanced, and it uses gimmicks to pretend.

They do everything in this budget to protect the Pentagon, but it doesn't

really because it is phony. They use the overseas contingency fund, which everybody knows is phony. They want to help the military. I want to help the military also. But, sadly, the Republican budget does absolutely nothing to provide similar protections for the middle class.

There is, however, some good news about the Republican budget, and it is this: The Republican budget isn't worth the paper it is written on. It is going to go nowhere. There is no chance of the budget actually being implemented. President Obama and the congressional Democrats are committed to the middle class, so we are not going to let it happen.

The administration has made it very clear that President Obama is not willing to lock in sequestration in any appropriations bill or in anything else. In a Statement of Administration Policy—the forerunner of a veto—the Obama administration said: “The President's senior advisors would recommend that he veto . . . any legislation that implements the current Republican budget framework.” Nor will the President accept fixes to defense without also fixing nondefense budget items. For President Obama, it is simply a matter of principle, and congressional Democrats fully agree with his principle. So the Republican budget isn't going anywhere.

If Republicans insist on moving appropriations bills based on that budget, it is a waste of their time. It will not happen. We will not let that happen. What we need is a budget that is based in reality, a budget that is fair to the middle class, fair to the American people, a budget that will only happen when Republicans abandon their extreme attacks on the poor and middle class and sit down and talk to us about the way forward.

I note that no one is seeking the floor, and I would ask that the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 10:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided in the usual form.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. CAPITO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the time be charged equally between the majority and the minority.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FLAKE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT REVIEW ACT

Mr. FLAKE. Madam President, I come to the floor today to talk about S. 615, the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act. This bill establishes a process to guarantee congressional review of any agreement reached between the P5+1 and Iran.

Like everybody else here, my goal is to ensure that Iran does not acquire nuclear weapons. With that goal in mind, I have avoided supporting measures over the past 18 months that would impact the administration's ongoing negotiations. I believe it is incumbent upon us to explore every avenue of diplomacy to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

There have been suggestions that this legislation we are considering today will negatively impact the negotiations for a final agreement. To the contrary, I think this legislation will improve the chances of reaching a final accord. Most importantly, it will improve the chances that this accord will stand the test of time.

If approved, the President will have to negotiate knowing that Congress will ultimately review this agreement. That is only proper given that the terms of the agreement go far beyond—far beyond—the current administration.

In truth, Congress has always had a role here. It was the U.S. Congress that passed the sanctions that brought Iran to the negotiating table. It is only the U.S. Congress that can permanently lift the sanctions. Unfortunately, the administration would prefer to go it alone when it comes to the implementation of this agreement by using the waiver authority that was granted when these sanctions were passed.

There is no dispute that the President can lift these sanctions on a temporary basis. But since this agreement is slated to last well beyond the President's term and even the next President's term, any effective, enduring agreement has to have congressional buy-in. Let me repeat. If this legislation fails, the President will be able to sign a final agreement and have a nice signing ceremony, but an effective, enduring agreement to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon will require congressional buy-in.

We also need to recognize that we are not operating in a vacuum. Once an agreement that includes our allies is reached, the multilateral sanctions regime that has been so effective in bringing Iran to the negotiating table will be defunct. These sanctions have been effective because it has been Iran versus the West rather than Iran versus the United States. It is unreasonable to assume that such a united front can be reassembled before Iran obtains a nuclear weapon.

That is why the bill before us today is so important. It sets up a process for review by Congress of any agreement, preventing the administration from presenting Congress with a fait accompli. This legislation will not repeal any sanctions currently in place against Iran. Congress will still have to take action to lift these sanctions permanently. Its passage ensures that if Congress does repeal the sanctions, it does so because it chooses to, not because it has no other choice.

I would also like to take a moment to reflect on the process that brought this bill out of committee. Tough issues were thoughtfully worked out and compromises were made to get this bill language to a place where the bill was voted unanimously out of committee with a recorded vote. Thanks to firm commitments made by the chairman and the ranking member to keep this bill bipartisan, the White House—which for weeks had threatened to veto the bill—reversed its position just hours before the markup. This about-face was likely due to the fact that there were so many Senators on a bipartisan basis lining up to support this bill.

This legislation signals to the administration that it needs to keep Congress in mind when it negotiates. And, without poison pill amendments being added, the President will be forced to sign it.

Most importantly, I am hopeful that the passage of this bill out of committee signifies a return to a time the Foreign Relations Committee is able to work across the aisle on foreign policy matters. I realize it cannot always happen, but the ideal is when partisan politics can—as Senator Vandenberg put it—stop at the water's edge.

The reality is that given the myriad of foreign policy challenges that confront us around the globe, we do not have the luxury of partisanship, and nowhere is this more evident than with the legislation we are considering today. I hope we can come together and pass it.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ROUNDS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.